STUDY #1 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE VEHICULAR ACCESS

November 21, 2001

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Ensuring vehicular access to recreation facilities, areas, and trailheads is an important part of recreation management. This study will determine the extent to which private and public vehicle access routes are facilitating or restricting visits to the Lake Oroville area.

2.0 STUDY OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study is to identify the opportunities for and constraints to public and private vehicular access to Study Area land and water resources. This study focuses on roads within the Study Area. Examination of regional transportation links will be conducted in Study #14—Assess Regional Recreation and Barriers to Recreation. The effects of future development and project operations on public access will be investigated. This study addresses Issue Statement R1—adequacy of recreation project facilities, opportunities, and access to accommodate current use and future demand. It specifically addresses Issues RE 1, 2 5-17, 19-39, 55, 56, 60, 64-83, 95, 96, 104 and 105.

3.0 RELATIONSHIP TO RELICENSING/NEED FOR THE STUDY

This study is needed to meet the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's) direction to ensure public access. Specifically, FERC guidelines state that the licensee shall "make provisions for adequate public access to such project facilities and waters" (Part 2, Subchapter A, Chapter One, Section 2.7 of 18 CFR).

The purpose and need for the study is to address Issue Statement 1—adequacy of recreation project facilities, opportunities, and access to accommodate current use and future demand. It will examine vehicular access to recreation areas and facilities within the Study Area.

4.0 STUDY AREA

The Study Area includes Lake Oroville, the lands and waters within and adjacent to (1/4 mile) the FERC project boundary, and adjacent lands, facilities and areas with a clear project nexus.

Campgrounds

Bidwell Canyon Campground
Bloomer Cove Boat-In Campsite (BIC)
Bloomer Knoll BIC
Bloomer Point BIC
Bloomer Group BIC
Craig Saddle BIC
Foreman Creek BIC
Goat Ranch BIC
Floating Campsites
Lime Saddle Campground
Lime Saddle Group Campground
Loafer Creek Campground
Loafer Creek Group Campground
Loafer Creek Horse Campground
Oroville Wildlife Area (Larkin Road Camping Area)
Thermalito North Forebay RV "en route" Campground

Day Use Areas (DUAs)

Lake Oroville Visitor Center
Lime Saddle DUA
Bidwell Canyon DUA
Loafer Creek DUA
Oroville Dam Overlook Area
Spillway DUA
Oroville Wildlife Area
Saddle Dam DUA
Thermalito North Forebay DUA
Thermalito South Forebay DUA
Thermalito Afterbay DUA (off Highway 162)
Thermalito Afterbay Wilbur Road DUA
Thermalito Afterbay Larkin Road DUA
Diversion Pool

Boat Launch Areas (BLAs)

Lime Saddle BLA
Loafer Creek BLA
Bidwell Canyon BLA
Enterprise Boat Launch Ramp (BLR)
Nelson Bar Car-Top BLR
Foreman Creek Car-Top BLR
Dark Canyon Car-Top BLR
Stringtown Car-Top BLR
Vinton Gulch Car-Top BLR
Thermalito North Forebay
Thermalito South Forebay
Thermalito Afterbay

Other Recreational Facilities with Project Nexus

Floating Restrooms
Brad P. Freeman Bicycle Trail
Dan Beebe Hiking/Equestrian Trail
Dispersed Use areas along upper and lower reaches of the Feather River
Aquatic Center
Fish Hatchery
Clay Pit State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA)
Model Aircraft Flying Area
Oroville Wildlife Area (OWA)

5.0 GENERAL APPROACH

Task 1—Research Public Access Inventory

Current public access will be identified and assessed by driving and walking through roads open to the public within the Study Area. Particular attention will be paid to Study Area shoreline access opportunities and constraints. Mapping (GIS) will be used to identify developed recreational facilities, informal recreation areas, formal and informal parking areas, roads, and resource and other access constraints to shoreline and waters within the Study Area. Study Area information, in the form of GIS data layers, will be provided by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) or the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).

Part of this Task will include an evaluation of parking at smaller boat launch ramps. This evaluation is considered an access issue because if parking is too scarce, it limits access to some of the small boat launch ramps. At some of the smaller boat launch ramps parking may be quite a distance from the water, thus a lack thereof may be an access issue.

Task 2—Current Access Assessment

Public access areas within the Study Area will be evaluated using three ratings: high, medium, and low accessibility to the public (with standard passenger automobile). The ratings are defined as follows:

- High: Existing road(s) in good to adequate condition
- Medium: Existing roads in poor condition
- Low: No roads

Ratings will also include the type of road surface (e.g., paved, gravel, or dirt). Particular attention will be paid to Study Area shoreline access opportunities and constraints. Potential new alignments that could facilitate use of areas currently unaccessible will be noted. Criteria for each rating will be defined and include ease of access and obstacles encountered at each location, perceived or otherwise. A descriptive analysis will then summarize areas to which the public currently has reasonable access.

Task 3—Research Future Development Effects on Public Access

Researchers will solicit input from DWR, DPR, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to determine planned future recreation developments. This will include consideration of interim recreation projects. This task will follow the same methodology as Task 2, but will assess planned development. Planned recreation development areas to which the public will have reasonable access will be summarized. Planned highway projects, such as extending Grand Avenue to Highway 99, and widening Highway 162 will also be evaluated and summarized.

Task 4—Research Access During the Next License Period

Existing and planned public access areas within the Study Area will be evaluated using the same methodology as Tasks 2 and 3, but will take into consideration recreation use levels affecting the next license period. Researchers will also solicit additional information from the Butte County Public Works Department, Caltrans, DWR, DPR, DFG, USFS and BLM about public access factors affecting the project during the next license period. Criterion for each rating will be defined and will include ease of access and obstacles encountered at each existing and planned location, perceived or otherwise. Areas to which the public will likely have reasonable access during the term of the next license will be described and summarized.

6.0 RESULTS AND PRODUCTS/DELIVERABLES

Results

This study will identify vehicular access in its current condition, and determine whether or not it is a barrier to recreation visits to the Study Area. Where barriers are identified, the research team will make recommendations for addressing or removing them. Additionally, the study will address access needs during the next license period to facilitate increased demand for recreation activities.

Products/Deliverables

The following products will be developed for this study:

- Draft Final Report
- GIS-based maps

The report will include an executive summary; an introduction; objectives; methods; results; and recommendations to improve or change access for current and future recreation demand. The GIS-based maps will display areas that need improved access.

7. 0 COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Coordination with Other Resource Areas/Studies

This study will require coordination with Study #9—Existing Recreation Use; Study #10—Recreation and Facility Condition Inventory; Study #12—Projected Recreation Use; Study #14—Assess Regional Recreation and Barriers to Recreation; and Study #15—Recreation Suitability.

Issues, Concerns, Comments Tracking, and/or Regulatory Compliance Requirements

This study addresses Issue Statement R1—adequacy of existing project recreation facilities, opportunities, and access to accommodate current use and future demand. It specifically addresses issues RE 1, 2 5-17, 19-39, 55, 56, 60, 64-83, 93, 96, 104 and 105.

8.0 STUDY SCHEDULE

Data collection: June 2002 through August 2002.
Data analysis and report writing: September 2002 through January 2003.
Draft Final Report due: February 2003.